

Message Text

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ACTION AID-05

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TAGS: EAID

SUBJ: GABON- HOUSING GUARANTY

DEPT FOR SER/H

ABIDJAN FOR RHUDO

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REF: ABIDJAN 1195

1. EMBOFF MET WITH ESSONGHE OF ONH AND MAZETIER OF SGAEI FEB 13 AND 14 RESPECTIVELY TO ELICIT COMMENTS ON KINSHASA HOUSING GUARANTY CONFERENCE AND ON STATUS OF GABON HG PROGRAM.

2. ESSONGHE SAID THAT KINSHASA CONFERENCE HAD BEEN WELL ORGANIZED AND HIGHLY PROFITABLE FOR HIM AND OTHER DELEGATES. HE NOTED REGRETFULLY THAT DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN ONH AND AID ON SITES AND SERVICES STILL HOLDS UP FURTHER PROGRESS ON GABON HG PROGRAM. WHEN PRESSED FOR DETAILS, ESSONGHE SAID A) SITES AND SERVICES "NOT SUITABLE FOR GABON"; B) ONH ALREADY HAS PRLGRAM FOR A NUMBER OF "LOW COST" HOUSING PROJECTS WHICH IT DOES NOT WISH TO ALTER; AND C) ADDITIONAL VISIT BY USAID REP TO GABON MIGHT HELP SOLVE CURRENT IMPASS.

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3. MAZETIER OF SGAEI ACCOMPANIED BY CHAVIHUT TOLD EMBOFF HE VERY DISTURBED AT NEWS GIVEN CHAVIHUT IN KINSHASA THAT SGAEI HOUSING PROPOSAL COULD NOT BE APPROVED INDEPENDENT OF ONH PLAN. MAZETIER SAID THIS WAS NEW REQUIREMENT WHICH WOULD BE BADLY RECEIVED BY GABONESE BECAUSE A) GOG POLICY DELIBERATELY KEEPS TWO ENTITIES SGAEI AND ONH DISTINCT. AID REFUSAL TO DO LIKEWISE WOULD SIMPLY ATTEMPT ALTER A BASIC GOG POLICY; B) AS FISCAL SYSTEMS OF TWO ORGANIZATIONS QUITE DISTINCT, SEPARATE AGREEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE SIGNED WITH AID ANYWAY; C) GOG WILL REGARD AID REQUIREMENT THAT SGAEI PROPOSAL BE DEPENDENT UPON THAT OF ONH AS UNWARRANTED PRESSURE ON GOG TO ACCEPT PRINCIPLE OF SITES AND SERVICES.

4. MAZETIER SAID THAT FIRST SEGMENT OF SGAEI OWENDO HOUSING PROJECT ALREADY UNDERWAY AND THAT HE HOPES HAVE ALL FINANCING FOR SECOND (I.E. USAID FINANCED) PORTION ARRANGED BY END OF 1975 WHICH MEANS THERE MUST BE AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF HG BY 30 JUNE. MAZETIER ALSO SAID THAT AS IT WELL KNOWN THAT ONH NEW ORGANIZATION, WHOSE PLANNING WOULD EVOLVE SLOWLY, HE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY AID DID NOT CHOOSE TO HAVE SOME IMMEDIATE IMPACT IN GABON BY GOING AHEAD WITH SGAEI PROGRAM.

5. RETURNING TO SUBJECT OF SITES AND SERVICES, MAZETIER SAID HE WISHED ASSURE USG HE HAD NOT TALKED AGAINST IDEA WITH GABONESE AS THIS WAS SUBJECT BETWEEN ONH AND USAID. HE HAD HOWEVER, HE RECALLED, ALREADY GONE ON RECORD WITH SER/H OFFICIALS AS COUNSELING AGAINST SITES AND SERVICES FOR GABON. HE THEN REPEATED ARGUMENT THAT SITES AND SERVICES EXCELLENT FOR COUNTRIES SUCH AS UPPER VOLTA OR CHAD WHERE TRADITIONAL BUILDING METHODS PRODUCE DURABLE HOUSING UNITS; BUT THIS IS NOT THE CASE IN GABON WHERE PEOPLE KNOW ONLY HOW TO THROW UP WOODEN SHANTIES. GOG DOES NOT WISH TO SEE SHANTY TOWNS AROUND MAJOR CITIES NOR DID HE THINK USAID WOULD WISH TO BE CONNECTED WITH SUCH LOW STANDARD HOUSING.

6. COMMENT: MUCH OF FOREGOING PROBABLY ALREADY KNOWN TO ADDRESSEES BUT EMBASSY WISHED TO SET DOWN ITS UNDERSTANDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF WHERE WE STAND ON GABON HOUSING GUARANTY PROGRAM FOR RECORD. IT APPARENT BOTH ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM NOW STALLED - - ONH SEGMENT BECAUSE OF GABONESE UNWILLINGNESS ACCEPT SITES AND SERVICES; SGAEI PROPOSAL DUE AID INSTANTANCE THAT TWO PROPOSALS GO HAND IN HAND. SER/H IS BEST JUDGE OF WHETHER IT STILL WORTHWHILE TO SEND AID REP TO GABON FOR FURTHER ATTEMPT TO GET SITES AND SERVICES INCLUDED IN ONH PROPOSAL. THOUGH THERE IS

CLEARLY MUCH SPECIAL PLEADING IN MAZETIER'S PRESENTATION, WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SIGNED HG PROGRAM WITH SGAEI AS EVIDENCE OF OUR GOOD FAITH AND THAT WE MOVING AHEAD ON AT LEAST ONE FRONT. WE ASSUME THERE IS NO STATUTORY REQUIREMENT FOR BOTH SGAEI AND ONH AGREEMENTS TO BE SIGNED TOGETHER AND THEREFORE SUGGEST THEY BE SEPARATED IN THE INTERESTS OF OUR IMAGE HERE IN GABON.

7. FYI: CHAVIHUT SAID THAT "DOSSIER" NOTED REFTEL COMPOSED MERELY OF TEXT OF GOG DECREE ESTABLISHING HOUSING COMMISSION (ALREADY SENT ADDRESSEES) AND MINUTES OF COMMISSION'S FIRST MEETING WHICH MINISTER OF HOUSING CHARGED WITH FORWARDING TO EMBASSY AS PROOF GOG IMPLEMENTING REQUIREMENT OF ELABORATING NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY. EMBOFF SAID DOSSIER HAD NEVER BEEN RECEIVED. CHAVIHUT PROMISED CHECK WITH MINISTRY OF HOUSING (MINISTER BIBALOU CURRENTLY ON LEAVE) AND PROVIDE EMBASSY WITH ALTERNATE COPIES. EMBASSY HAS POUCHED ADDRESSEES TEXT OF A JULY 1973 ORDINANCE CREATING ONH WHICH WAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN OFFICIAL REGISTER.
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